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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1570
INFO RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 1787
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY 0005
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001841

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [LY](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY DROPS VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR MORE COUNTRIES

Classified By: Acting POL Counselor Jeremiah Howard for reasons 1.4(b,d)
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¶1. SUMMARY: (C) MFA Head of Visa Section Kemal Demirciler recently gave us a consular perspective on the increasing number of Turkish bilateral visa waiver agreements. He said his department is not consulted before a visa waiver agreement is signed, and he expects no notification as to which countries will be next. He said visa waiver agreements appear to be on-the-spot-decisions by high-level GOT leaders during their official visits. These new visa waiver agreements affect both the MFA consular department, which is not consulted but must implement the decisions, and Turkish border crossing officials, who do not have the infrastructure to deal with the increase in visitors and additional screening responsibilities. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Demirciler said the recent increase in visa waiver agreements is causing frustration to both the MFA consular department and even more so to the border gate officials. On the MFA consular side, Demirciler said they are not consulted by Turkish political leaders on these decisions. Turkish ministers travel to a country, sign an agreement, and the consular section is left to work out the details of implementation. We asked if there is an overall plan for when and which countries would be chosen for visa waiver agreements. Demirciler replied he does not know why countries are chosen or which ones will be next: "They just go, and sign agreements."

¶3. (SBU) At the borders, Demirciler said the officials now complain that they do not have the infrastructure to deal with their ever-increasing burden as more and more countries are added to the visa waiver list. The officials must deal with both increasing traffic from the waiver countries, and the fact that now the burden of screening lies fully on them. Demirciler said that after the visa requirement was lifted with Syria, traffic more than doubled. Also, he said that with Syria, on certain dates such as religious holidays, travel is permitted with only ID cards as documentation. After the visa waiver was signed with Libya, he said planes between Libya and Turkey are now "full, with two flights a day."

¶4. (U) Ordinary passport-holders of the following countries are exempt from visa requirements for stays in Turkey varying from 30-90 days by country. "New" indicates an agreement that has been signed and implemented in the past six months. Full list and details can be found at:
<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/visa-information-for-foreigners.en.mfa>

Andorra
Albania (new)
Azerbaijan (in progress)
Bosnia-Herzegovina

Brazil
Brunei
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark
Ecuador
El Salvador
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Guatemala
Honduras
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC
Iceland
Iran
Israel
Italy
Japan
Jordan (new)
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Libya (new)
Liechtenstein
Lithuania (new)
Luxembourg
Macedonia
Malaysia
Mongolia
Montenegro

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Morocco
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Paraguay
Singapore
South Korea
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria (new)
Tajikistan (new)
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
Turkmenistan
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Vatican
Venezuela

JEFFREY

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